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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an analysis of the perceptions intern language arts teachers have of the roles their cooperating teachers play in content and pedagogical knowledge development. Eight secondary student interns in secondary language arts participated who were completing a 14-week teaching internship which was the final requirement of a 5-year teacher education program. Data were collected by structured and unstructured interviews, twice-weekly journal accounts, classroom observation, and a preliminary questionnaire. The investigation indicated that dialogue between intern teachers and cooperating teachers revolved around classroom management and procedural concerns rather than content knowledge. The focal points of dialogue and dissonance between cooperating teachers and intern teachers appeared to be interpersonal relationships and the acknowledgement that teaching styles are unique to the individual teacher. Results suggest that intern teachers value positive interpersonal relationships and for them a major source of dissonance was not being sure whether the cooperating teacher approved of them or their teaching style. A discussion of the results includes considerations on the value of extended field experience programs. (JD)

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The cooperating teacher is an important player in the debate surrounding the preparation of teachers (Goodman, 1986; Holmes Group, 1986; Lanier & Little, 1986), the effect of field experiences on student and intern teachers (Hoy, 1967; Hoy & Rees, 1977; Koehler, 1975; Zeichner, Tabachnick, & Densmore, 1987), and the evaluation of intern teachers' performance (Tollefson & Kleinsasser, in preparation). Despite an emphasis of pedagogy and content courses preparatory to field experiences, key studies identify classroom management at the center of field experiences, not student learning (Hoy, 1967; Hoy & Rees, 1977; Iannaccone, 1963). Those findings are supported by Tabachnick, Popkewitz, and Zeichner's (1979-1980) characterization of the cooperating-teacher/student-teacher interaction as procedural and management issue-oriented.

In an empirical study investigating the characteristics distinguishing interns rated as above average, average, and below average by their cooperating teachers, Tollefson and Kleinsasser (in preparation) report free response data showing that personal characteristics of interns (e.g., dependable, enthusiastic, positive attitude, flexible, humorous) appeared most often in the ratings of interns by cooperating teachers. Similarly, personality factors were cited by Hunt (1988) as the most important variable identified by special educators and general educators in determining whether two teachers could work together within a class environment.

One potentially valuable direction of teacher-thinking

research (see Clark & Peterson, 1986, for a review of the literature) is an examination of the student-teacher/cooperating-teacher dyad using ethnographic or information processing methods. Recent studies (Magliaro & Borko, 1986; Kleinsasser, 1988b; Tabachnick, Popkewitz, & Zeichner, 1979-1980; Zeichner, Tabachnick, & Densmore, 1987) address instructional interactions in the complex ecology of a teaching/learning setting. It is a setting intensified by the placement of a student or intern teacher, and needs to be investigated, necessarily, in situ.

This paper presents an analysis of the perceptions intern language arts teachers have of the roles their cooperating teachers play in content and pedagogical knowledge development. The data reported here represent one segment of a larger, hypothesis-generating study postulating the epistemology of practice articulated by novice language arts interns (Kleinsasser, 1988b).

Method

Participants. Eight (four males, four females) secondary language arts student interns completing a 14 week teaching internship participated in the investigation. The internship was the final requirement, and second major field experience (preceded by a six week student teaching experience), of a five year teacher education program at a major teaching-research institution in the Midwest. Prior to both field experiences, the interns earned baccalaureate degrees. With the exception of a

31-year-old male, all of the interns were 22 or 23 years old at the time of the study. The 14-week teaching placements represented the full range of 7-12 language arts, e.g., senior high (grades 10-12) composition, literature, grammar, and speech/forensics, and junior high (grades 7-9) reading, writing, grammar, and spelling.

Study Design and Data Analysis. Consistent with a methodological research approach appropriate for in situ investigations of complex questions (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; and Yin, 1984), a variety of data were collected. This triangulated the findings, a process of collecting data which represent multiple perspectives of the same phenomenon to build a trustworthy and credible case (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data included structured and unstructured interviews, twice-weekly journal accounts, classroom observations, and a preliminary questionnaire surveying demographic data and teaching beliefs/ideals. The investigation spanned seven months.

Data were collected, analyzed, and presented consistent with the one of the assumptions of naturalistic inquiry (see Lincoln and Guba, 1985), e.g., the research participants were co-investigators. Throughout the study, member-checks established the accuracy of on-going data analysis by the investigator. Formal member-checks occurred at the conclusion of the study, as interns read and reacted to their individual case studies for accuracy.

Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant-comparative method was

the analytic technique. The analyses yielded eight, separate, analytic case studies that were subjected to pattern-matching (Yin, 1984). The pattern-match produced a single case study, or analytic representation, of a language arts intern.

Analytic Results. A content analysis of each case produced themes which characterized the description of practice for each intern. See Table 1.

Table 1 about here.

Pattern-matching the cases yielded three themes common to all interns. See Table 2. Two of the themes are specific to the development of a pedagogical and language arts content knowledge base within the cooperating-teacher/intern-teacher interaction. They will be the focus of the following analysis.

Table 2 about here.

Dissonance and Dialogue

Classroom ownership. Consistent with other research findings (Hoy, 1967; Hoy & Rees, 1977; Iannaccone, 1963; Tabachnick, Popkewitz, & Zeichner, 1979-1980; Zeichner, Tabachnick, & Densmore, 1987), analyses of interview and journal data throughout the seven month investigation indicate that dialogue between intern teachers and cooperating teachers revolved around

management and procedural concerns, i.e., observing the cooperating teacher long enough to get a feel for the rhythm of the class, planning for and evaluating student work, covering material in a timely fashion to meet quarterly and semester schedules--attention to instructional pacing.

An analysis of exit interview data revealed two themes of cooperating-teacher/intern teacher interaction. See Table 3. Interns cited positive interpersonal relationships and the acknowledgement of unique teaching styles as the way their cooperating teachers would describe them. Both themes represent the focal points of dialogue and dissonance between cooperating teachers and intern teachers.

Table 3 about here.

Positive interpersonal relationships. Findings from the larger study (Kleinsasser, 1988b) suggest that the cooperating teacher's pedagogical and content leadership or modeling is inherent within his or her right of classroom ownership. Terry¹, Sean, Greaser, and Ilsa identify interpersonal relationships and personality variables as elements of a positive teaching experience. In the following transcription, Terry demonstrates his deference to the cooperating teacher's classroom ownership in the way she would describe him:

¹All names are pseudonyms.

It depends on when you ask her. I think she would probably mention sense of humor because she told me about that several times. She liked the way I used that in the classroom. I guess, maybe, conscientious, because I try to do a...I was always trying to do a good job. I felt like I tried to do a thorough job and I tried to keep her aware of everything I was doing, all the time. I tried to...I realized, for most teachers, giving up the room like that would be, kind of, tough and I think it was tough for her, so I tried to make it as easy as possible for her by keeping her informed. She didn't really play an active role in the class, but I tried to make her feel like she was always involved ... I think it's tough to do a good job of being a cooperating teacher, especially when you have to give up all your authority in the classroom and your kids to someone else that's still wet behind the ears. They don't come out and say that, but I think most of them probably feel that way.

Deferent and willing to accept guidance, Sean pinpoints her cooperating teacher's wealth of experience as a source of confidence:

I think she'd, she'd consider me a friend. ... And, I think she'd feel comfortable enough to put me to ... to offer assistance if she thought I needed it, whether I asked for it or not. I think she feels comfortable enough around me to say, 'Hey, I think it would be better if you would do it this way instead of the way you're doing it', and trust that I wouldn't get all upset and ticked off at her for suggesting a different, a different way of doing something. I think she'd say I accept criticism well. And that I've overcome great...I've improved a great deal since I started. I think she'd say I'm going to be a good teacher, and that I think she'd really like to see where I am in five years and see what I'm doing. I think that would really interest her. She's a wonderful lady ... what she's suggested to me has always been valid and very well supported just by day, daily things, daily events, and I think that helped establish, you know, like, she could tell me to paint my finger red and I'd probably do it just because, you know, she's been around so much longer and she just seems like she is a good teacher and she's, she'd be great to model after. And so just because she's a good teacher she's someone valid to listen to. I would trust her if she told me.

Similarly, Greaser lists personality variables:

I hope, I think she would say that I try hard and I am genuinely interested in the kids and want to teach them and want to see them develop. I think she would say that I am too nice, that I don't get on to them enough. I think she might say that I need to be more organized, not so much as far as lessons, themselves, but as far as the whole process. I think, she might say that I like to teach and I want to be a teacher and more than just in the classroom, outside the classroom as well.

Ilsa:

[cooperating teacher] let me read his evaluation of me yesterday. And it was very nice, very good . . . he sees me as a good teacher. Someone who cares about the students . . . he said he's hire me . . .

Unique teaching styles. The subjectivity of teaching language arts is one of the general themes emerging from pattern-matching the eight cases. Asserting that there are no right or wrong answers in teaching English, Sean says of her cooperating teacher, "She's a real good teacher, as far as I can see. Sure there are things that I'd do differently than she does, but that's not to say that hers are wrong and mine are right." Sean explains that teaching experience determines the legitimacy of different or unique teaching approaches:

I think you just have to learn to deal with it, with what's in your head, and no two people are going to do anything exactly the same way. And we could teach the same novel and I'd teach it one way and you'd teach it another. I mean, I'm sure there'd be some similarities but there'd be a lot of differences too, I think. Just by being given that opportunity, you're going to learn something, if not about yourself, but about the way you teach, and it's going to change every time you teach it.

To another intern, Terry, teaching differences are stylistic:

We had different styles and so I think way into my internship, I realized that I wouldn't have the same

style as my cooperating teacher and it was nice that she realized it, also, and that we talked about it. She went as far as to, when we were talking about the observations that I would be doing of other teachers, she would say, "Well, I think that you would enjoy this one because I feel like his style is a little closer to yours than mine is."

Only Chris, a speech and forensics intern, identifies strong content knowledge in her analysis of the cooperating teacher's view of her, although unique teaching styles and the importance of interpersonal relationships are cited too:

I think that she thinks I'm very good in content. She says that she thinks that I am very strong in what I know about debate and speech. We're very different style-wise so I'm not sure, I think she would say that I'm maybe a little too laid back in my teaching style because she's much more structured than I am. I think . . . she would wonder about my separation of, of personal and professional life although I doubt that she would really harp on that ..."

While teaching language arts content--grammar, literature, speech/forensics, components of the writing process--was a sub-theme emerging from the data, it is critical to note, however, that it fell within the over-all theme of positive interpersonal relationships. Interns saw the language arts as a vehicle for affecting their students' lives in positive ways. In relationship to the modeling provided by their cooperating teachers, when differences occurred, the vague term, "teaching style" was invoked by the interns to assert their unique, neither right nor wrong, approach to the teaching-learning process. In effect, "teaching style" acknowledges a teacher's right of classroom ownership, a salient message of the internship experience. For both the cooperating teacher and the intern teacher,

classroom ownership means that differences in "teaching style" are played out without further question or challenge, since a teacher has his or her own way of doing things. Therein lies dissonance or ambiguity for the teacher who is only in the classroom setting because he or she is also an intern.

Ambiguity. Despite 14 weeks in the field, four of the interns never felt they knew how they stood with their cooperating teachers. Says Anne,

Well, I don't know because she's never really let on. That's really hard for me to guess, actually . . . I don't have many clues. ("Does it bother you?") Yeah, because I want to know. I need that feedback. I am still learning in this role and I really feel like I need that guidance, still.

Linus,

I have no idea. She gave me a copy of the evaluation she wrote up for me and it was very good and she checked--on my evaluation for my credentials file--outstanding in every category, except two, which were very good, the next highest . . . her comments were very positive, but I just get a feeling that through the first two thirds of it, when things weren't going very well, I wouldn't, at all, have expected to have a good evaluation. I think things did improve a lot, but I still don't really know how she feels, for sure.

Simon,

I haven't heard anything negative. She did make a comment to my supervisor that I could plan things out a little better. Of course I knew that but the last couple times they talked she said that I'd been doing some interesting things and she thought I was doing a good job so, . . . I, I haven't heard anything from her directly or indirectly that I've, that I've been doing anything, an inadequate job anyway. She seems to be pleased with what I've been doing . . . she's never actually told me, she's never said, "I think you're doing a fine job and I think you're going to make a good teacher," or anything like that.

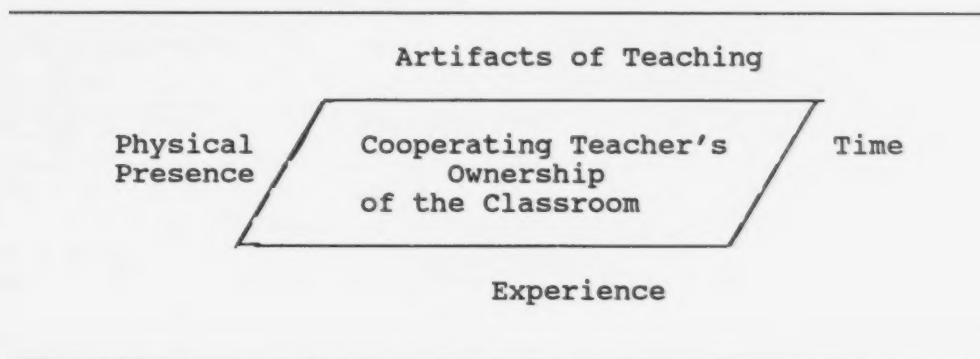
Although she received a positive summative evaluation, Ilsa's

analysis of the internship, as a whole, is ambiguous at best:

...through the whole thing . . . I've been saying this through the whole thing, I, I'm just never really sure what he thought of me . . . I really didn't like her (Ilsa's other cooperating teacher) at first. I didn't like her at all. She and I really started to click about two weeks ago. . . . And I, and now she's going to bat with me with the principal for me, with the principal on this drill team English thing . . . maybe I quit fighting her. I don't know, what it was. Maybe I thought, you know, I only have two weeks left I'll just relax about this, I don't know.

Classroom ownership. One topic of dialogue between intern teacher and cooperating teacher is classroom ownership--being a real teacher in the eyes of learners, in the eyes of the school community, and in the eyes of self. Classroom ownership is such a pervasive element, it does not have to be overt or verbalized. See Figure 1. Ownership includes four components: a) the cooperating teacher's presence; b) the artifacts of teaching, e. g., grade book, key, desk; c) time; and d) experience. For an detailed analysis of the four facets of classroom ownership, see Kleinsasser, 1988a.

Figure 1. Classroom ownership: Four Barriers.



The overriding message that the cooperating teacher's classroom ownership delivers to intern teachers is that real teaching experience can begin only in one's own classroom. Results of an empirical study by Tollefson and Kleinsasser (in preparation) corroborate this finding. Similarly, Richardson-Koehler (1988) found learning by doing as central to the belief structure of elementary teachers, in a field study of teaching triads, i.e., student-teacher, cooperating-teacher, supervising-teacher.

Summary and Recommendations

Summary. One definition of dissonance is incongruity. Expectations of preservice field placements present numerous sources of potential incongruity for intern teachers. Results of this investigation suggest that a major source of dissonance for intern teachers rests in a teaching/learning ideal that values positive interpersonal relationships. Never knowing how they stand with their cooperating teacher, or whether the cooperating teacher approves of them or their teaching effectiveness e.g., teaching style, is one source of considerable dissonance. The same right of ownership (in the hands of the cooperating teacher) that intern teachers bridled under, served as a mediator of intern-teacher/cooperating-teacher differences: every teacher has a unique, neither right nor wrong teaching style.

Ostensibly, most field experiences might include the following goals a) provide an opportunity to observe a competent, even expert teacher in action, b) provide an opportunity to

develop confidence in a real teaching/learning setting over a substantial period of time, c) provide an opportunity to garner practical experience; and d) provide an opportunity to field test pedagogical and subject matter knowledge. The findings of this investigation present significant challenges to a realistic completion of these goals. In particular, student teaching followed by graduate level teaching internships do not seem to alter or alleviate the dissonance of being a teaching intern in another teacher's classroom.

The cooperating-teacher is a crucial member of the field experience triad. Results of this investigation indicate that selecting cooperating teachers for their content expertise or their pedagogical skill might undermine the efforts of a pre-service teacher to develop both content and pedagogical expertise. Interns deferred to their cooperating teacher's pedagogical and content knowledge because that person had a different style, more experience, and most importantly, was the owner of the teaching-learning setting. By deferring, interns avoided a potentially valuable confrontation of pedagogical and content issues. Alternately, experienced and/or expert cooperating teachers, unless trained in verbalizing their "narrative of teaching," pass along powerful teaching cliches, e.g., be tough at the beginning, or are unable to explain to interns the underpinning pedagogical, content-based, or philosophical reasons for their decision-making. By "respecting" or tolerating each other's teaching style, neither the cooperating teacher nor the

intern teacher is required to analyze positive or negative features of teaching style. For the most part, intern teachers were unable to test recently acquired theoretical knowledge in both pedagogy and language arts content against idealized teaching beliefs and ideals.

Findings reported here uncover specific elements of technical or institutional control, i.e., time requirements and constraints as a facet of classroom ownership. This supports previously reported research of Zeichner, Tabachnick, and Densmore (1987).

Recommendations. The field experience component of teacher preparation appears to be aligned with blanket, state-legislated certification requirements rather than the abilities and needs of teachers in preparation. Recent teacher reform documents (e.g., Holmes Group, 1986) fail to address individual differences in preservice teachers at the same time they call for increased professionalism. Furthermore, there is no acknowledgment of the growing number of re-entry adults in teacher education programs and the different kinds of knowledge those individuals bring to teacher education preparation and field experiences. This research would suggest, in fact, that there is considerable room for alternative certification routes falling in between the New Jersey plan and professional teacher education programs that span five or six years.

The interns in this study reported receiving favorable if not glowing recommendations from their cooperating teachers and

grades of A for the field experience. All found teaching positions and are currently employed at the junior and senior high levels, in public schools. Yet, formal member checks of the case studies yielded disturbing statements by two interns:

My overwhelming feeling now is that I am really afraid of school starting. I don't have much experience working with poor, black kids (Linus).

I know there's a ton I have to learn and a lot of trial and error that I'm going to have to do through and there's going to be good times and bad times and...I'm expecting lots of days where I go home and don't want to go back...especially at the junior high level and that kind of scares me, because I haven't had any direct experience with that...I guess I'm pretty confident that I'm going to be a good teacher, or at least soon, maybe not that first year, but soon. Um...I don't know (Sean).

Subsequent conversations with Sean indicated that "the ton of stuff" included a plan for reading novels during the summer, despite commenting that she's getting scared about the coming fall and her first real job.

Virtually all of the teacher thinking literature, particularly that relating to novice teachers, identifies Lortie's characterization that perspective teachers spend at least 12 years in an "apprenticeship of observation." In either the absence of real dialogue about the teaching-learning process or the presence of dissonance about teaching effectiveness, it would appear that student teaching experiences or teaching internships have the potential to be extended periods of observation. Specifically, the observation and experience of classroom ownership.

Content analyses of interviews and journals indicate a

secondary importance of content knowledge development or pedagogical risk taking during a supervised activity designed to garner experience and field-test knowledge in both domains. That is not to suggest that interns were not interested or concerned about components of the language arts or language arts pedagogy. There is no evidence to suggest, however, that extended field experiences intensify dialogue about language arts content or pedagogy. For example, the record does not show a specific reference to Public Law 94-142 in seven months of data collection and analysis. The evidence does challenge both the quantity and quality of extended field experiences. In light of these analyses, further research focusing on the type and effect of the student-teacher/cooperating-teacher interaction is warranted. Specifically, in situ studies of preservice science, math, and social studies teachers are needed that document the realities of field experiences from the perspectives of all involved: the cooperating teacher, the supervising teacher, and both sets of clients--students and student or intern teachers.

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Table 1

Thematic Summary of the Case Studies.

Anne:

- a) The humanity of teaching: building and modeling positive interpersonal relationships;
- b) Ambiguity: English curriculum versus student self concept building; deference to the cooperating teacher's ownership of the classroom versus implementing her own style of management and instruction; gaining experience versus disappointment in the placement;
- c) Time and the rhythm of school;
- d) Non-teaching priorities.

Chris:

- a) Ownership and responsibility for the teaching setting;
- b) Caring, cooperation among students, and growth of group rapport;
- c) Growth of self awareness;
- d) The importance of experience in learning to teach
- e) Effective planning and teaching practices.

Greaser:

- a) Respect for and deference to the cooperating teacher's experience and authority;
- b) Caring about students and developing positive relationships with them;

Table 1 (continued)

- c) The rhythm of instruction--units, weeks, days, the instruction hour;
- d) Language arts planning and evaluation;
- e) Classroom management, discipline, and organization.

Ilsa:

- a) Interpersonal relationships;
- b) Teaching as performance;
- c) Planning and gaining experience through trial and error;
- d) The legitimacy of classroom-created knowledge;
- e) Teacher ownership and independence in the classroom.

Linus:

- a) Gaining confidence through experience;
- b) Making the study of English a low priority for students, as pleasant as possible;
- c) Gaining instructional experience through trial and error to find out what will work in the classroom;
- d) Acknowledging a teacher's unique, neither right nor wrong approach to teaching English;
- e) Tacit knowledge of teaching.

Sean:

- a) Developing and maintaining a positive interpersonal relationship with students;
- b) Making the study of English, a low priority for students, as pleasant as possible;

Table 1 (continued)

- c) Gaining instructional experience through trial and error to find out what will work in the classroom;
- d) Acknowledging a teacher's unique, neither right nor wrong approach to teaching English;
- e) Tacit knowledge of teaching.

Simon:

- a) Imagination and creativity in teaching;
- b) Teaching English: organization, planning, evaluation, and expectations;
- c) The press of time and the rhythm of school;
- d) The student teacher role;
- e) Teaching as personal involvement.

Terry:

- a) Interpersonal relationships;
 - b) Implementing a unique teaching style;
 - c) Ownership and responsibility for the classroom;
 - d) Time pressures and the rhythm of school;
 - e) Gaining experience;
 - f) The character of teaching language arts at the senior high level.
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Table 2

Themes Emerging from Pattern Matching the Case Studies.

- A. The task of becoming a real teacher:
 - 1. Classroom ownership/constraints of the student teacher role
 - 2. Gaining experience
 - B. Interpersonal relationships:
 - 1. Positive interpersonal relationships, caring, and rapport
 - 2. Making language arts fun
 - 3. Literature and composition as subjective, different from math or science content
 - C. Curriculum and Instruction--planning driven by time:
 - 1. The rhythm of school, constraints of time, instructional pacing (technical control)
 - 2. Planning by thematic units, activities, daily plans
-

Table 3

Sources of Dissonance and Dialogue for Intern Teachers.

Sources of:	Dissonance	Dialogue
Positive Interpersonal Relationships	Anne Ilsa Linus Simon Chris	Greaser Ilsa Sean
Unique Teaching Style	Chris Ilsa	Terry Sean
